

Topsfield Planning Board

August 7, 2007

Chairman Morrison called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. Board members present were Martha Morrison, Janice Ablon, Gregor Smith, Ian deBuy Wenniger, Robert Winship. Roberta Knight, Community Development Coordinator was also present.

Visitors: No visitors in attendance.

Bridal Spur Extension ANR Continuance: Member Gregor Smith made the motion to continue the consideration of the ANR application for the Bridal Spur Extension to the September 4, 2007 meeting; seconded by Jan Ablon; so voted 5-0.

Minutes: Clerk Jan Ablon made the motion to approve the minutes of July 17, 2007 as amended; seconded by Bob Winship; so voted 4-0. Ian deBuy Wenniger abstained.

It was the consensus for the Board to defer the review of the draft minutes of January 2, January 23 and February 7 until the next scheduled meeting. Chairman Morrison will email revised minutes to all members for their review and comments.

Bills: Member Gregor Smith made the motion to approve the BSC invoice in the amount of \$1,620.55 for 120 High Street Peer Review; seconded by Ian deBuy Wenniger; so voted 5-0.

Appointment of Master Planning Committee: Clerk Jan Ablon made the motion to appoint Jeannine Cunniff, Heidi Fox, Joseph Geller, Philip Knowles, Andy Sims and Holger Luther to the Master Planning Committee; seconded by Bob Winship; so voted 5-0.

It was the consensus of the Board members to develop a mission statement for the Master Planning Committee in order to give the Committee a clear set of issues to address during the year. Two issues discussed were the Route 1 & Ipswich Road Intersection and the Business/Highway zoning district. Chairman Morrison volunteered to draft the statement for circulation and comment.

MAPC/Metro Futures: Chairman Morrison noted that the MAPC is holding meetings at various regional sites to discuss policies and agenda items that will affect the region's future and quality of life and become the basis for its legislative agenda. The Topsfield Planning Board will be hosting a North Shore Metro Future's event in September. Chairman Morrison requested that Ms. Knight coordinate the event with the MAPC.

New Business:

Low Impact Guidelines: The Board members reviewed the draft copy of the low impact guidelines and discussed the waiver issue. It was noted in the discussion that it is up to the Board to grant waivers for requirements under the Sub-division Rules & Regulations. However, the Board must first make the determination that a specific site is suitable for low impact development in order for the site to be eligible for waivers. It was the consensus of the Board that a "Site Suitability Section" should be drafted and incorporated in the "Waiver Section". Member Ian deBuy Wenniger volunteered to draft language for this section. The Board also discussed changing the title to just "guidelines", noting the approval date on the final document, and distributing the guidelines as an attachment with the Sub-division Rules & Regulations.

Flood Plain: Chairman Morrison referred to an email sent to the Planning Board relative to the Flood Hazard Management Program that involves not only the Planning Board but also other local permit granting officials: Inspector of Buildings, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, and Public Works. The Planning Board is responsible for the Flood Plain By-law that is Article VI of the Zoning By-laws. Chairman Morrison will commence a review of the By-law. Ms. Knight noted that she found insurance rate maps when cleaning out the old Planning Board office. The Board agreed that this could be a task for the Master Planning Committee.

Agricultural By-laws: The Board reviewed the memo from John Ryan of 32 Prospect Street. A potential commercial horse operation at 44 Prospect Street is the subject of Mr. Ryan's memo to the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Morrison also referred to a memo from Meg Black and Parsons Clark concerning outdated use regulations that should be revised by the Planning Board. Chairman Morrison further noted that the Town's use regulations specifically section 3.9 in the IRA and section 3.8 in the IRA/ORR districts are not in compliance with MA general laws. MA general laws have a very broad definition of agricultural that includes commercial farm operations. Under the current by-laws, a commercial farm operation is not permitted in the IRA district that includes the location of 44 Prospect Street; however, the enforcement of said bylaw would be in violation of state law. Based on the above referenced case, the Town could change the IRA district to an IR district and then regulate agricultural uses under the five (5) acre cap.

Master Plan Charter: The Board recapped the issues for the Master Planning Committee as follows:

1. Review zoning for Parsons Corner (Route 1 & Ipswich Road Intersection)
2. Review zoning in Business Highway District
3. Flood Plain By-law
4. Agricultural Uses

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta M. Knight
Community Development Coordinator